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action which he performed was to say certain prayers every day to the holy Virgin; and through the mercy of Mary this miserable devotion was the means of saving him from eternal death! Behold how! He had the good fortune of contracting a friendship with Father Matthew de Basso. He pressed this father so much to dine with him on a certain day, that the father, at length, consented; as soon as the father entered the house, the advocate said to him—'Father, I will show you a thing which you never have seen. I have a wonderful ape that does the work of a servant—he washes the glasses, lays the table, and opens the door for me.' 'Perhaps,' replied the father, 'it is not an ape, but something else; let me see it.' The ape is called repeatedly, but does not appear; at length, he is found concealed under a bed, but refuses to come out. 'Let us,' said the religious, 'go and see him.' As soon as he arrived at the place along with the advocate, he said—'Infernal beast, come forward; on the part of God I command you to tell me what you are.' Behold, the ape answered that he was the devil, that he was waiting till the advocate would omit, on some day, his accustomed prayer to the Mother of God; he added, that he had permission from God to strangle him on that day, and to carry him off to hell. At these words the poor advocate fell on his knees, and asked assistance from the servant of God, who encouraged him, and commanded the devil to depart from the house without doing him any harm. 'I only give you permission,' said the religious, 'to make a hole in one of the walls of the house as a sign of your departure.' After these words a loud noise was heard, and in the wall an aperture instantly appeared, which God wished to remain for a long period, though it had been closed several times with lime and stone.—Vol. i., p. 310.

We think we have now proved sufficiently that in order to the efficacy of this devotion to Mary, no repentance is required. This "practice of piety" may be followed by a highwayman or a harlot, by people in the constant exercise of the grossest sin, and yet, while it is persevered in, the devil has no power to hurt, and eventually the grace of contrition is bestowed. If we accept these stories as true, is not St. Liguori's assertion fully proved, that it is morally impossible that a servant of Mary's can be damned? Who would not be willing to take advantage of a means of salvation that does not require one to make, immediately, a painful effort to part with cherished sins, but only to spare a few minutes each day to say a "Hail, Mary." But, alas, the hardness of heart of some people is astonishing. There are some who grudge even this small trouble, and for whom St. Liguori and his coadjutors have been obliged to provide a still easier method of salvation. Without even requiring us to spend some minutes every day in prayer to the Virgin, they teach that it will be sufficient to find a couple of minutes some time or other in our lives, to put on the scapular of Mary in sorrow, and then we may bid defiance to the devil and all his works. Witness the story (vol. ii., p. 245), which we have not space to give entire, of the young man in Perugia, who sold his soul to the devil, by a writing under his hand, signed with his blood, and yet, notwithstanding, the poor devil was cheated; for when he came to obtain fulfilment of his bargain, he found that the young man had on his neck the scapular of Mary in sorrow, and the devil was neither able to persuade the young man to take it off, neither could he carry him to hell with it on; so he had to retire in confusion. And the following story is nearly as conclusive (vol. ii., p. 141):—

"A priest, hearing confession in a certain church, saw standing before him a young man, who appeared to wish and, at the same time, not to wish to go to confession. Looking at him several times, the father, at length, asked him if he wanted to go to confession. He answered in the affirmative; and finding that the confession would be a long one, the confessor brought him to a solitary apartment. The penitent began by saying that he was a foreigner and a nobleman, and that he did not know how God could pardon him after the life he had led. Besides innumerable sins of impurity and homicide, he said that he had entirely despaired of salvation, that he had begun to commit sins, not so much for the indulgence of his passions, as through contempt and hatred of God. He said, that, among other things, he always carried about him a crucifix, which he had maltreated through contempt. He said, that on that morning he made a sacrilegious communion; and for what purpose? In order to have an opportunity of afterwards trampling on the consecrated host. After having received the sacred host he wished to execute his wicked purpose, but was prevented through fear of the persons who were present. He then consigned to the confessor the consecrated particle which he had wrapped up in a paper. He stated, that in passing by the church he felt a strong impulse to enter; being unable to resist it, he went in, was instantly stung with remorse of conscience, and felt a certain confused and irresolute will to go to confession. Hence, he placed himself before the confessional; while he was standing there his confusion and diffidence were so great that he wished to leave the church, but it seemed to him that some one had kept him by force, until the father asked him if he wanted to go to confession. 'I now,' said he, 'see myself here; I find myself at confession, and I know not how.' The father then asked him if he had practised any devotion during this time, meaning devotion towards most holy Mary, for such miraculous conversions only come through the powerful hand of Mary.

'No, father,' replied the young man; 'I have practised no devotion; I regarded myself as already damned.' 'Reflect a little,' added the father, 'and endeavour to remember whether you were not in the habit of performing any act of devotion.' 'No, father,' he replied, 'I have practised none.' But putting his hand on his breast, he perceived that he wore the scapular of Mary in sorrow. 'Ah, sir,' said the confessor, 'do you not see that the Blessed Virgin has obtained this grace for you. Know,' added the father, 'that this is the church of the Virgin.'

And thus the whole mystery was explained; and the foreign nobleman went away full of gratitude to Mary, and resolved on leading a new life.

We mentioned above that there are two reasons which, to Protestant minds, make the continuance in sin appear very unsafe; one is the power of sin in hardening the heart, so as to make repentance the more unlikely the longer the sinner has persisted in vice; the other reason is, the uncertainty of life, and the danger of our being hurried away from this world without having power to carry our good resolutions into effect. Now, we have seen that the first of these dangers does not exist for those who are persuaded of the truth of St. Liguori's tales. No lengthened continuance of sinful habits throws any impediment in the way of contrition and pardon, if the form, at least, of devotion to the Virgin has been kept up. It remains for us to show how the second of these dangers is also obviated; but our article has run to a considerable length already; and we cannot now afford the room necessary for the additional citations which must be made from St. Liguori, for the reflections which the quotations we have made suggest, and for the consideration of the apologies which have been put forward in defence of the saint. We must, therefore, stop here for the present, but hope to pursue the subject in the next number. And when we have given another article to St. Liguori's devotional writings, we shall then be able to proceed to another topic, on which more than one of our subscribers have expressed a wish for information—namely, the moral theology of the same saint.

THE ROMISH SYSTEM.

[THE following thoughts have been communicated to us by the ex-Abbé Miel, formerly a distinguished Roman Catholic priest in France, and are, we think, highly interesting, as throwing light on the process of mind by which he was led to abandon the Church in which he was brought up. We would have wished to have presented it to our readers also in the original French, being conscious that it loses much of its real force and eloquence in our translation; but we are unable to do so from want of room.—ED.]

It is not merely the monopoly of truth which the Romish Church arrogates to herself, but also that of virtue. Her adherents never admit that any one can sincerely and conscientiously think differently from themselves in religious matters; and to hold back or refuse submission to the authority of Rome is generally, in their eyes, only a sign of pride or perversity. This prejudice, injurious as it is to those against whom it is directed, is also most fatal to those who are its slaves. To seek to dissipate what I believe to be a fatal doctrine, and to show, with God's help, whether it be the partisans of the Romish system or its adversaries, who have reason and conscience for their guide, is the end I have in view in writing the following lines. And, first, let us consider the unheard-of fact, one which has not its parallel in the annals of mankind, and which, therefore, singularly provokes to reflection, that an institution exists among us, of which each member taken singly is only a sinful man like other men, but which institution, nevertheless, gives itself out to be divine, and arrogates to itself the highest attributes of divinity. Addressing itself to every human being who comes into the world, it demands from him homage, fidelity, obedience, love; it says to him, "Come to me, I am the way, out of which you will infallibly go astray. No one comes to the Son, and, consequently, to the Father, except by me. I am the truth, certain, immutable as God himself; out of me there is only uncertainty, darkness, and lies. I am life; I open and shut the springs of it at my will; he who drinks of my waters will live eternally; he who deprives himself of them can only perish. My empire resembles no other; it is the absolute empire of souls. I reign over the intelligence to which I give laws, and impose impassable barriers. I reign over the heart; its most secret movements ought to be revealed to me. I reign over the conscience; I have the power to bind or to absolve it; and this power does not end with the life that now is, it passes the tomb, and extends to another world!" What language is this? Who ever held such before? Yet these are only some of the pretensions of Rome!

Now, in considering these pretensions, we will suppose a wise man, a man sincerely anxious about his eternal destiny! a man to whom salvation is the greatest of all affairs! What should this man do? Should he accept such assertions immediately, without hesitation, without examining them? Such conduct would be the most culpable temerity on his part! If they related to matters of little moment it might pass; one could understand a determination being lightly taken. But the question placed before him is a capital question; it is a question of life or death; error would be fatal—would be damnation.

Never was it more indispensable to proceed with caution and with prudence, and not to decide, except with perfect confidence; therefore, the man, who is a sincere friend to truth and duty, will consider himself as rigorously obliged to weigh carefully, to examine strictly, to reflect maturely on these pretensions, before he surrenders himself to them, as his guide through time and eternity.

Well! let him set to work, and he will scarcely have reflected a moment before what appeared only strange, will now appear suspicious. What! will he say to himself, men who give themselves out as having rights over the soul—the soul which is the peculiar province of God! Men who call themselves infallible, when experience has shown, everywhere and always, that human beings are subject to illusion and error, when the Holy Spirit has revealed to us that it is so without exception—"Omnis homo mendax." Men who claim for themselves the special attributes of God! who wish to make themselves equal to the Most High! Was it not a crime of this kind that created hell, and which has flooded the earth with a deluge of evils? Was it not for wishing to become like God that Adam was driven out of the Garden of Eden, and that Lucifer was cast out of Heaven? How much reason have I to fear that men of like passions with myself should act in this matter under the influence of the same spirit of pride, which seduced even the angels of God, and man in a state of innocence. How ought I to be on my guard, and how foolish and criminal should I be to yield up all power over my own soul into the hands of these men, unless they can really *prove* to me, and that in the most irresistible way, their divine authority! Let them give proofs, therefore, and manifest testimony, which shall exclude all doubt, and prevent any hesitation; without this my adherence to your system cannot be conscientious. These proofs, too, and this testimony, must be of a nature not only to satisfy a fully developed intelligence, but open to the comprehension of mankind in general, and of unlearned minds, otherwise your religion is, at once, convicted of not being the religion of Christ; for it was the poor and the humble, in the first place, that he came to evangelize. Now, does Rome produce such proofs and such testimony? can she furnish them? I do not say a great number of proofs, or even several, but *even one—one* which can legitimately command the submission of both wise and simple! No, there is not one—Rome produces no proof. She does not even seek to furnish one, but by a new pretension, stranger still than the rest, and truly worthy to crown the others, in assertions so prodigious, and of such importance, Rome expects to be believed on her word!

A man once appeared in the midst of time who did not fear to make this prodigious affirmation—"I am God." This man was JESUS CHRIST, the only Son of the Father, and equal to him in all things. Certainly, if ever any one had a right to be believed on his own assertion, it was the Incarnate Word. So far, also, was this divine assertion, when he made it, from appearing suspicious, that, coming from him, one would be predisposed to admit it. It was enough to contemplate once that august countenance to feel convinced that Jesus was more than man; it was enough to hear one word from his mouth to be able to say, "Never man spake like this man." Well, did the Son of God avail himself of these favourable dispositions to invoke in favour of his divinity, only his own testimony? Let us listen to him and learn!—"If I bear witness of myself my witness is nothing"—that is to say, you ought not to submit to it; but it is my Father who bears witness of me—it is the Scriptures and my works, also, bear witness to me." And, in truth, the Father was heard proclaiming several times from Heaven, "This is my well-beloved Son." Tested by the Scriptures, he sheweth himself in all things to be the end of the law—the realization of its figures, as well as the object of its predictions; and his miraculous works attested his divinity in a still more satisfying manner. All infirmities and diseases fled before his face as before the master of health. The dead were raised to life at his voice, as at the voice of the author of life. The sea bowed beneath his feet, as if under the feet of its sovereign. All nature was moved at his approach, as at the approach of its King; and even the devils obey his voice, and are constrained to confess to his supreme power. This was the way in which Jesus Christ *proved* and confirmed his assertions, and such is the value which He sets upon human reason, the greatest of the gifts which we have received from the liberality of the Creator. Such are the proofs which the incarnate word condescended and thought it right to present to us, before He demanded our adoration, in order that it might be paid him with full faith and love.

And yet, you, poor mortals—as miserable as the rest of mortals—pretend to impose your authority on my soul, without informing me first, if you have any legitimate title to such power. Vainly does the voice of all ages cry out to you that *none is permitted to pronounce in their own case*. Vainly does eternal truth consecrate the principle, and herself set us the example of it. There exists in the world a society of men who, despising the voice of ages, exalting themselves above the Son of God, repeat loudly and continually, "*We bear witness of ourselves and our witness is true. We judge in our own case and every soul ought to submit to our decisions. Woe to those who refuse!*" Mahomet appealed for the truth of his doctrine to the sword. We appeal for the truth of ours to hell! Mahomet said, 'believe or I kill thee.' Sometimes

we say the same, but, generally, do better, and say, 'believe or be damned!'

What audacity!

But there is more than audacity in this; there is, also, profound cunning. Rome knows it well. There is nothing more likely to make an impression and lead men than such an assertion, uttered in a form so menacing and absolute. And those who are astonished that the adherents of the Romish system should be so numerous, prove they understand very little of the mystery of human nature.

But question these million subjects of Rome; ask them to give a reason for their belief, and I affirm, that out of a hundred you will find ninety-nine who can only answer, "I believe what the Church tells me, *because she says so.*" And they boast of such credulity, and represent it to us as the perfection of faith, humility, and virtue. Such faith is condemned by common sense; such humility is reproved by conscience; such virtue, it is to be feared, will be treated as a crime by Him who will judge every one of us at the last day.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

The great length of Mr. Pover's letter has obliged us to postpone one from Mr. W. Rourke till our next. Several other valuable communications, already in type, are also postponed from want of room.

We beg to call the attention of our correspondents to the utility of adding their name and address to their communications.

To diminish the chance of disappointment, all letters should be forwarded to the office by the first day of the month.

All letters to be addressed to the Editor, 9, Upper Sackville-st.

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TO SUBSCRIBERS.

THE publishers respectfully request their subscribers to remember that their subscriptions are payable in *advance*. It is hoped that those who are in arrear will be good enough to remit or pay the amount due, without the necessity of special applications. Where the annual sum is so small as 3s. 6d. per annum, it is impossible to make application in the usual manner without incurring a serious expense in proportion to the sum due. Mr. Curry will, therefore, feel greatly obliged by remittances, and begs to return his grateful thanks to those who were good enough to remit the amount of their subscriptions since the publication of the last number.

The Catholic Layman.

DUBLIN, MARCH, 1855.

ROMANISM IN AMERICA.

THE subject of the temporal power of the Pope has lately begun to occupy a considerable share of public attention amongst our brethren in the United States. The *Tablet* newspaper of the 3rd inst., contained a speech delivered on this question by the Hon. J. R. Chandler, in the House of Representatives, on the 11th of January in the present year, which the editor truly describes as "a very able and important speech." As the subject is one of much practical interest, we propose to discuss a few of the arguments and statements which are brought forward by Mr. Chandler. Before doing so, however, we think it well to say a few words on the remarkable change in public opinion which has taken place in America within the last few years, with regard to the position and influence of the Roman Catholic Church in that country. The causes by which this change has been brought about are so singular and instructive, that a brief sketch of them may prove interesting to many of our readers.

During the first half of the present century—that is, up to about the year 1850—the prospects of the Church of Rome in the United States were peculiarly encouraging. There was no established church in that country from which she had any need to fear either rivalry or opposition. In the midst of various religious parties

the Roman Catholic Church was almost the only body which possessed the advantages of compact organization and united action. Its numbers were yearly augmented by a steady and continuous stream of immigrants from other countries, especially Germany and Ireland. Even where the people were nominally Protestant, the Roman Catholic priests often met with a favourable reception. In the thinly-peopled districts of the Western States, the settlers in which were often obliged to locate themselves in the depths of untrodden forests, the arrival of *any* religious teacher was hailed with satisfaction. The Church of Rome, with provident forethought, availed herself of the opportunity thus offered. She planted her priests and missionaries in considerable numbers along the great valley of the Mississippi, which she plainly saw was destined in time to rise into immense importance, and to become, perhaps, the most powerful and influential portion of the great Confederacy of the West.

All these causes, combined with others which it would be needless to specify, daily augmented the influence of the Roman Catholic Church and priesthood in America. Their aid was eagerly sought after by politicians of all parties, who hoped, by their means, to rise to distinction. In a country where almost every place is given away by universal suffrage, it is no wonder that unscrupulous men, who desired to gain "the most sweet voices" of the multitude, should naturally have recourse to the Romish priests, who were supposed, rightly or wrongly, to have the votes and consciences of a large part of the electoral body in their keeping. No means of flattery or conciliation were left untried to win their favour and support. A Roman Catholic archbishop was asked to preach before Congress, although the overwhelming majority of that body were Protestants; and, in the state of New York, a judge laid down from the bench the rule, that a priest was not to be interrogated about the secrets of the confessional (a principle then quite new to American law), with the hope, as was generally supposed, of thereby gaining the vote of the Roman Catholic party at the next election for the governorship of that state.

At length the ambition of the Romanist party in America took a higher and a wider flight. The love of power and influence is deeply implanted in the heart of man; and the priests of the Church of Rome, cut off by the stern policy of their Church from all family ties, have generally devoted their untiring energies to projects of worldly aggrandisement. The Roman Catholic party, which had hitherto been content to turn the balance in some local contest, now sought to exercise a controlling influence in the presidential election itself. The nomination of Franklin Pierce, the existing President of the United States, is generally supposed to have been carried by their instrumentality; and the effect of it certainly was, to introduce a large number of Roman Catholics into the public offices which were in the gift of the President.

At last, however, the reaction came. The native Americans took alarm when they saw many of the chief offices of the state conferred upon persons of foreign birth, and members of a Church which owed allegiance to a foreign spiritual head. Suddenly it began to be whispered that a secret confederacy had been formed, under the singular title of the Know-Nothing party, the members of which had bound themselves by an oath never to vote for any Roman Catholic. With magical rapidity this new association diffused itself through the length and breadth of the United States, and by the latest accounts it was reputed to include two millions of adult members. History scarcely records an instance of an organization formed with such rapidity, and on such a gigantic scale.

The principal argument by which, so far as

we can learn, the Know-Nothing party justify their proceedings is one which has often been urged in our country, both in Parliament and elsewhere—namely, that as a Roman Catholic is bound to obey the Pope, he can never give an undivided allegiance to the constitutional authorities of his native land. The speech of Mr. Chandler, to which we have already adverted, is an elaborate attempt to show that this argument does not rest on sufficient historical grounds. We now proceed to consider a few of his assertions in detail, and we begin by giving the general statement of the question in his own words:—

"The charge, then, against the Roman Catholics of this country is, that their views of the supremacy of the Pope render them unsafe citizens, because it renders them liable to be withdrawn from their allegiance to their own civil government by the decrees or ordinances of their spiritual superior."

Let us now see how Mr. Chandler proposes to meet this charge:—

"Mr. Chairman, I deny that the Bishop of Rome has, or that he claims for himself the right to interfere with the political relations of any other country than that of which he is himself the sovereign. I mean, that I deny to the Bishop of Rome the right resulting from his divine office to interfere in the relations between subjects and their sovereigns. I recognise all the rights of the venerable head of the Church to the spiritual deference of its children."

Now, with all respect to Mr. Chandler, we consider that Cardinals Bellarmine and Baronius are better authorities than he is on the power and privileges claimed by the See of Rome; and it is a remarkable fact that both Cardinals stigmatize as *heretical* the opinion advocated by the American orator. We quote, as usual, their express words:

"They are branded for heretics who take from the Church of Rome and the See of Saint Peter one of the two swords, and allow only the spiritual."

So far Cardinal Baronius. Let us now hear Bellarmine:—

"The next opinion, or rather *heresy*, teaches, that the Pope, as Pope, has by divine right no temporal power, and that he has no right to command temporal princes, much less any power of depriving them of their kingdoms."

We commend the following passages, from the same author, to Mr. Chandler's attentive consideration:—

"The third and intermediate opinion, and that which is generally received by Catholic theologians, is this—That the Pope, as Pope, has not *directly* and immediately any temporal, but only a spiritual power; that, nevertheless, by reason of this spiritual power, he has a certain authority, and that *supreme, in temporal.*" "That the power of the Pontiff, properly, chiefly, and in itself, is spiritual; but that by it he can dispose of the temporal things of all Christians, when such a measure is necessary to the end of his spiritual power; to which the ends of all temporal powers are subordinate." "He has no power merely temporal; and yet, in order to a spiritual good, he has the *supreme power of disposing of temporal things.*" "The spiritual power does not interfere in the temporal concerns; but suffers all things to proceed so long as they do not oppose the spiritual end, or be not necessary to obtain it. But if anything of this sort occurs, the *spiritual can and ought to coerce the temporal, by any way or means which may appear necessary.*"

It is a remarkable circumstance, that the opinions of Bellarmine on the extent of the Papal power, extravagant as they may appear to us, failed to satisfy Pope Sixtus V. He thought, we are told, that Bellarmine had done a great prejudice to the dignity of the See of Rome, by insisting that the power of the Pope over the tem-

* *Hæresis errore notantur omnes qui ab ecclesia Romana et cathedra Petri e duobus gladiis alterum auferunt, nec nisi spirituale concedunt.*—Baronius, anno 1033, § 14.

+ *Altera non tam sententia quam hæresis docet, primo, pontificem ut pontificem ex jure divino nullam habere temporalem potestatem, nec posse ullo modo imperare principibus secularibus, nedum eos regnis et principatu privare.*—Bellarm. de Rom. Pontif. lib. v. §. 1. Tom. i., p. 344. Colon. 1615.

† *Tertia sententia media, et Catholicorum communis, pontificem ut pontificem non habere directe et immediate ullam temporalem potestatem, sed solum spirituales; tamen, ratione spiritualis, habere saltem indirecte potestatem quandam, eamque summam, in temporalibus, &c.*—Bellarm. de Rom. Pontif. lib. v., cap. 1, §. 6, p. 344, et sq. ut supra.